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Farm Broadcasters Letter

U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2555

April 24, 1992

SNAIL DRAGNET -- USDA has a dragnet out to apprehend fist-sized snails illegally imported from Africa. The giant African snails are popular as terrarium pets, but can reproduce rapidly and are voracious plant feeders, says **Glen Lee**, deputy administrator for plant protection and quarantine with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. These snails were illegally imported from Lagos, Nigeria, apparently listed as reptile shipments, and thus were not inspected by USDA ag inspectors. A 1970s introduction of a similar snail took nearly six years to eradicate. USDA will not fine people who turn the snails in. People with information on the whereabouts of these exotic snails should call (301) 436-8295. **Contact: Doug Hendrix** (301) 436-7253.

DESIGNER GRAINS -- Creating "designer grains" to boost the value of cereal crops will be the focus of a USDA Feed and Food Grain Nutrient Composition Workshop, May 4 to 6 at the St. Louis Airport Marriott. "There is a large, untapped potential to use genetics to add value to both the food and food produced from some of our most basic grain crops," says **Charles F. Murphy**, national program leader for grain crops for USDA's Agricultural Research Service. **Contact: Marcie Gerriets** (309) 685-4011.

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP -- Foreign interests owned 14.8 million acres -- or slightly more than 1 percent -- of privately-owned U.S. ag land as of Dec. 31, USDA economists say. "Holdings have remained small and relatively steady from 1981 through 1991, fluctuating around 1 percent of privately-owned agricultural land in the United States," says **John Lee**, administrator of USDA's Economic Research Service. About 53 percent of the reported foreign holdings is actually land owned by U.S. corporations. The law requires them to register their landholdings as foreign if as little as 10 percent of their stock is held by foreign investors. **Contact: J. Peter DeBraal** (202) 219-0425.

GOOD NEWS ON HERBICIDES -- There is some encouraging news from two studies of herbicide movement toward groundwater supplies on Texas' Blackland Prairie. The studies -- each looking at two commonly used herbicides -- found the chemicals generally move no lower than 12 inches into the soil, well above underground water supplies, USDA scientists report. Also, at least 90 percent of the two herbicides were no longer detectable in the soil within 90 days of being applied. **Contact: Rodney W. Bovey** (409) 260-9238.

U.S. GETS SPICIER -- The U.S. imported more spices in 1991 than in 1990. The value went from \$355 million in 1990 to \$362.3 million in 1991. Value wise, vanilla beans were the most important spice import, followed by black and white pepper, capsicum peppers and paprika, sesame seed, cassia and cinnamon. The most expensive spices are saffron, vanilla beans and cardamom. **Contact: Rex Dull** (202) 720-2974.

GOOD VEGETABLE NEWS FOR CONSUMERS -- This spring, U.S. growers are likely to harvest 6 percent more fresh-market vegetables such as sweet corn, lettuce and tomatoes, compared to last spring. USDA economists say that in Florida, sweet corn acreage is estimated to be up 14 percent, while harvested tomato acreage will likely be down 2 percent. California lettuce acreage is expected to be up 2 percent. Given normal weather, spring fresh vegetable shipments should rise above a year earlier, leaving retail prices below last year's elevated levels. **Contact: Gary Lucier** (202) 219-0884.

RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE GUIDES -- USDA's National Agricultural Library has two new resource guides to help rural community leaders deal with problems associated with rural health services. "Rural Health Services Funding: A Resource Guide" and "Agricultural Safety and Health: A Resource Guide" are the latest in a series of rural development publications. The guides list selected publications and audio-visual materials in each subject area. **Contact: Brian Norris** (301) 504-6778.

BROILERS UP -- Commercial hatcheries in the 15 states USDA surveys set 3 percent more eggs than a year ago. During the week ending April 11, 1992, commercial hatcheries set 147 million eggs, compared with 143 million a year earlier. Average hatchability for chicks hatched during the week was 84 percent. **Contact: Tom Kruchten** (202) 690-4870.

MILK PRODUCTION UP -- Milk production during March totaled 11.1 billion pounds in the 21 major states, up fractionally from production in these same states a year ago. Production per cow averaged 1,343 pounds for March, 33 pounds above March 1991. The number of cows on farms in the 21 states was 8.26 million head, 13 thousand head below February and 200 thousand below March 1991. **Contact: Daniel Buckner** (202) 720-4448.

CHOLESTEROL TEST COULD HELP OYSTERS -- A cholesterol test developed for root-eating worms by a USDA scientist could have an unexpected payoff -- more oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. "I designed the test to learn more about nematodes, tiny soil-dwelling worms," says **David Chitwood**, with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. Chitwood's test identifies nematodes' cholesterol and other sterol compounds more quickly and accurately than other methods. A University of Maryland botanist **Glenn W. Patterson** adapted the test for studies aimed at learning which algae best nourishes the bay's oysters. **Contact: David J. Chitwood** (301) 504-8634 or **Glenn W. Patterson** (301) 405-1607.

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1820 -- On this edition of **Agriculture USA**, **Jim Henry** talks with several researchers working on new methods of gypsy moth control. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1302 -- Raising guide dogs; "cudding" the grass; high-tech way to find yourself; the Western fire season; new source for taxol. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1811 -- USDA News Highlights; wool and mohair payments; the bee business; seeding rangeland; high-tech precision for chemical application. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1517 -- Rekindling biofuels research; the ethanol contribution; buying time for pesticides; putting starch into biocontrol; micro vs macro encapsulation. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tues., May 5, weekly weather and crop update; Fri., May 8, vegetable production; Mon., May 11, U.S. crop production, world ag supply and demand; Tues., May 12, weekly weather and crop update, world cotton situation, world oilseed situation, world ag/grain situation. **(These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)**

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on the cancer-fighting drug, taxol, made from Pacific yew trees found in national forests; **Will Pemble** on USDA efforts to make taxol in the lab; **Lynn Wyvill** on U.S. tobacco production; **Dave Luciani** of Michigan State University on a new fruit packaging that controls ripening and prevents spoilage.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on crops and weather; USDA economist **Steve MacDonald** on U.S. ag trade; USDA economist **Jim Miller** on dairy; USDA economist **Barbara Claffey** with highlights from latest ag outlook report.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on USDA soil and earthworm research; **DeBoria Janifer** reports on controlling the cattle disease brucellosis; **Lynn Wyvill** on managing crop residue for erosion control.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

*Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:
Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT.*

OFFMIKE

COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE...is a hot topic in the area **Steve Bugbee** (KXXX/KQLS, Colby, Kans.) serves. He has been broadcasting all the information available to him, but notes many producers remain confused about who needs the license. Steve says the state Department of Transportation has been operating with extended hours to process license applications.

SPECIAL INTERVIEWS...on Earth Day, April 22, were broadcast by **Jay Truitt** (KMZU, Carrollton, Mo.). He interviewed farmers on the pro-active things they are doing to protect the environment, such as recycling, soil conservation practices, and measures to protect groundwater. **Teresa Reische** says she recently broadcast a program on KMZU that was aimed at farm safety for kids. It was based on a two-day seminar that included a series of safety demonstrations and videos watched by 110 children.

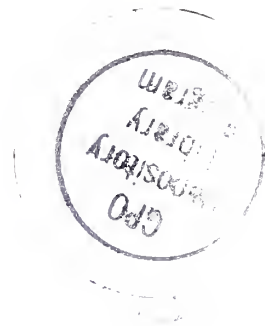
RECENT VISITOR...to the Radio and TV Division was **Curt Lancaster** (VSA Radio Network, San Angelo, Texas), who stopped by while covering some state producers' meetings in Washington, D.C. Curt said he and **Roddy Peeples** use aircraft to quickly cover issues and attend meetings.

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Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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SEVERAL PROPOSALS...have been made in Texas to control groundwater use. **Bob Cockrum** (Texas Agri-Business Network, Dallas) says they range from the state water commission to regional water conservation districts assuming control. It's a major issue because owners' rights at present include access to the property's groundwater. New voice on the network is **Scot Harrison**, formerly of KGVU, Greenville, Texas.

LOWER PRICES...could be a major factor in changing planting intentions of Mississippi farmers, says **Bob Wade** (Progressive Farmer Network, Starkville). Bob says low prices for cotton could cause producers to plant fewer acres. Overall financial health of producers has improved over the last decade, Bob says. Improved management and lower indebtedness has brightened the outlook this year for most Mississippi farmers.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio and TV Division